The Strange and Wonderful Relation of a Barbarous Murder Committed by

JAMES ROBISON,

A *Brick-layer*, upon the body of his own Wife, at *Spittle-Town*, about a Mile from *Dochester*, in the County of *Dorcet*, on the 11th. of *July*, 1679. who having lived a lascivious and most detestable life a considerable while, running on in all manner of Debauchery, was at the last perswaded by his Friends to marry, which incontinently he did, but to the inevitable destruction of both; for long had he not been Married, but by the Devil (who is never wanting at such essays) and the insnaring delusions of a wicked Harlot which he kept, who prompted him to it, he did in an outragious manner lay violent hands on his VVife, beating her in such terrible manner, that he often laid her for dead upon the floor; but notwithstanding for all this unspeakable hard usage, yet still the Devil prompted him to more Villanies, who would never leave him till he had ruin'd both Soul and body; and thus it was: This horrid Criminal one day came home, seeming more loving to his wife then heretofore, which put the poor woman into an extasie of joy, but this lasted not long, for about midnight, (she being asleep) he most inhumanely wrung her neck behind her, laying her body on the Floor, passing undiscovered for some days, but at last was taken & *examined*, who being found *guilty*, was *sentenc'd* to dye: shewing the Almighties providence in the discovery of it.

As also the full and True Relation of a Barbarous bloody Murder committed by *Richard Brown*, a *Romish*-Priest, at the Town of *Calleny*, in *Northumberland*, upon the body of an Infant, whom he murdered with a Pen-Knife, and tying a stone about it's Neck, casts it into a *Pond*. Likewise an account how he deflour-ed a young Gentlewoman, by whose Uncle he was entertained as a Father Confessor, and what subtile ways he used to accomplish his design, and after her Conception to destroy the Birth within her: With many other villanous Exp oits, and how the murder was miraculously discovered by a Servant-Maid at the point of Death, who was privy to the same, with many other horrible Circumstances, for which the Gentlewoman was Arraign'd and Condemned at the Assizes holden at *New-Castle* for the County of *Northumberland*, the 14th. of this Instant *August*, 1679.

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A ſtrange and true Relation of a Barbarous Murder, &c.

AMongſt the many Villanies of this moſt fatal kind, theſe Two of which I here intend to give my Reader Notice, may be ranked with thoſe which in relating make all ſerious people ſtart; for ſure it is no Villains in our Modern Age, performed Two ſuch deadly Crimes; the Firſt which was committed was as followeth.

In a Village about a Mile from *Dechester*, their Lived one *James Robinſon*, by trade a Brick-layer, being come of good Parents, and well Educated in conſideration of ſuch an Employ; but for the moſt part he regarded not the Dictates of his Induſtrious Parents, but being of a head-ſtrong humour, raſh, and ſelf-will'd, much inclin'd to vicious and debauched Aſſociates, of whom there is never wanting leud and wicked Women, who like ſo many Swords or guilded Baits, compoſed of deadly poyſon, draw men into ruine, who of themſelves are prone enough to meet Deſtruction in her ways, [as *Solomon* more amply does declare] ſetting forth his Admonitions as a Maxime, that all hereafter may avoid ſuch dangerous Events: but to the matter: His Parents ſeeing this, thought timely to reſtrain their wild Extravagant, and wean him from his Darling vice before they took too deep a root, and ſo perſwaded him to Marry, which he with much unwillingneſs imbraced, (an Omen of his future deſtiny) being thus Married to a beautiful and civil Maiden of that place, he for a while did ſeemingly reſtrain himſelf, and all admiring eyes were incontinently fixed on his moſt wonderful Converſion; but it laſted not, for in ſhort ſpace he revell'd as before, at which his Wife would oft repine, and patiently intreat him to forbear, but for her pains ſhe gained nought but blows, which often fell ſo heavy from his cruel hands that ſhe was left as dead; and as it was reported, he was ſtill incenſed to this by a notorious Harlot that he kept, and ſpent the competency that his friends had left

left him, and the portion of his Wife, which was considerable; But a such Villanies oft end in ruine and disgrace, so this befell, for his envy rising against his Wife for her good advice; and as the Prince of Darkness is never wanting to push forward Diabolick thoughts, so he in this incensed him to defile his hands with Blood, but then the wretch began to start when he considered that offended Justice would return the same on him. But after long debate it was in a secret Caball contrived between himself, his Mistris, and Infernal Friend, that to avoid suspition, or effusing Blood, he privately, and in the Night should break her Neck by turning of it round, but least she should with out-cries make it known, he first should stop her breath. This brave iniquity being so devised, and thus agreed upon, home he went, and to his Wife shows far more kindness then before, so that she was overjoyed, and thought her self more truly happy then then ever; so it too often proves with many that do suppose themselves secure when they stand tottering on the brink of fate, for this remorseless Villain, banishing all fear or pitty, about midnight surprizing her when fast asleep, and thought'es of such ill, with cruel hands he murders her, casting her body on the floor; In the morning early he rises, unconcerned at that most hanious fact which he had committed, and walked abroad Revelling till towards Night, then coming home and entring the house, he counterfeited an amazement, as if he had forgot his own pernicious deed, and calling to some Neighbours, told them that his Wife was fallen from the bed where he in the morning had left her, and was dead upon the Floor. This unexpected allarum hasted many to behold and deplore this accident, as they supposed, yet notwithstanding Iustice took notice of it so far that he was questioned for his Wives so sudden Death, but there being no hurt found upon the deceased body, (so cunningly had he contrived the fact) whereupon for that time he passed free from Iustice,

tho' not ſuſpicions and cenſures ; but the Funeral being paſt, and, as he ſuppoſed, all things over, but being fluſter'd one Evening (perhaps for joy of his late proceedings) his Gang began to introduce their Arguments concerning Scolding Wives, the which he hearing, was intentive, and would needs play the Phyſitian in that caſe to preſcribe a Remedy which ſhould put them to eternal ſilence; they all being covetous to hear this new experienc'd trick, beyond the Art of *Gallen*, or *Hipocrates*; but to ſee how Heaven decrees the deſtruction of wicked Men, and makes them oftentimes a ſnare unto themſelves, ſo his fatal preſcripion was his own deſtruction, and his own Tongue betrayed his Life, for ſays he, *Turn but a Scolding Wives Neck round, and her continual Clapper will no more allarm you, tho' it be placed right again; and to ſecure your ſelves from the ſuſpition of people, you may give out that ſhe Dyed of ſudden Fits. I would not*, ſaid he, *be ignorant of this Experiment for an Eſtate.*

His Companions giving good attention to what this Monſter of Humanity had thus ingeniouſly (as he thought) related to them, being Experimentally Tragical, began to conclude that his Wife lately made her Exit the ſame way preſcribed, this created a ſtrong ſuſpition among them, and whiſpered it ſo loud that Iuſtice a ſecond time thought fit to take recognizance of it; whereupon Order was given for the taking up of the body, the which was done, and by a Chyrurgeon ſearched, where it plainly appeared that ſhe periſhed by the ſelf ſame way beforementioned; ſo that the Murderer was carried immediately before a Iuſtice of the Peace, where being charged with the Crime of murder, he with many horrid Imprecations did deny the Fact, and amongſt the reſt upon his knees implor'd that if he was guilty, Divine Vengeance might light upon him, and that he might Rott alive : But notwithſtanding there being Evidence produced that he went out that morning,

Morning, and that none was in the House but himself that Day, nor the Day before, but onely his Honest Wife: So he was committed to *Dochester* Goal, in order to his Tryal, but during his imprisonment the effect of his notorious Imprecations were by Heaven just hand inflicted on him, for on a sudden all his Limbs began to swell with exceeding pain, and to rot by degrees; so that by reason of the nauseous scent none could approach to relieve him: In this lamentable condition he lay for some space of time, crying and wishing to dye; in fine, he was brought to his Tryal at the Assizes holden at *Dochester* for the County of *Dorcet*, where he freely confessed the Murder, and the manner, confessing Heavens hand was on him for his Imprecation, and that his Crime was so great he could not hope for mercy from offended justice; after which, according to Law, he received Sentence of death, and was accordingly Executed on the 5th. of this Instant *August* 1679, continuing very penitent to the last, and much bewailing his cruelty in murdering and provoking so good a Wife. And now one would think that this lamentable Example should restrain all desperate and wicked minded persons from the cruel guilt of dying their impious hands in Innocent Blood, left Heavens vengeance find them out, though ne'r so secretly contrived. And so much for the first most villanous and daring Cruelty, the next is not inferiour, but as vile and barbarous as Roman mischief could invent, or Hell conjoyned in a counsel could prescribe; the which was a cruel contrivance of one *Robert Brown*, first to deflore a young Gentlewoman, and after her delivery, to murther the Infant with a Penn-knife, and abscond it in a Well; The Circumstance is as followeth.

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An Account of a Horrid Murder, Committed by Robert Brown, *a* Roman *Priest or* Jesuit; *at a Town called* Calleny, *in the County of* Norththumberland.

WHereas the aforesaid *Robert Brown* about some two years since, making his visit to one *John Clavern* Esq; a very zealous *Roman-Catholique* in those parts, was by him very kindly entertained, and intreated to take up that house for his residence for some time, the which he as kindly accepted of, &c. The aforesaid *Clavern* having at that instant a very beautiful Virgin in his house, which he was Uncle to, who was likewise of the *Romish* profession; upon whom the aforesaid *Brown* often casting his adulterous eyes, resolved within himself to make her spotless Innocence a prey to his insatiate Lust; and therefore omitted no opportunity to Solicite her to comply with his unlawful, and to be abhorred desires, the which her vertues did as often repulse; but he becoming important in his most detested suit, she strove with arguments to quell his rash design, telling him he was a *Priest*, and was by the *Romish* Church forbid what he desired; to which, as impious as the rest, he made reply, *Though Marriage was forbid, enjoyment was allow'd.* To which she said, If he desisted not and did recant his suit, her Uncle should be made sensible of what had past. Thus fearing that his Diabolick Intreague would be spoil'd, he straight began to parley, and did intreat her that she would by no means asperse his Reputation, if but for his Function sake; to the which (after much intreaty mixed with threats of pennance if she did) he prevail'd with her to promise him perpetual silence: But this not satisfying the Letcherous Priest, after some respite, he resolved to prosecute his former design, and

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not to leave so fair an enterprize so neglected; whereupon he began to consider with himself, and to ruminate his cursed arts and villanous designs; for Hell is never wanting to assist and furnish its pernicious agents, with operations equal to their fatal wills, so in this, for he having procured by means of some of his wicked acquaintance, certain powerful Drugs to incence and stir up an impatient desire to venerial Copulation, he taking his oppertunity (at a certain Feast that her Uncle made to some of his Romish Friends) convey'd the portion which he had for that purpose prepar'd, into a Glass of Wine, the which the young Gentlewoman drank of, not mistrusting the fatal consequence; but the aforesaid *Brown* following his oppertunity, plyed her Uncle so briskly with Wine (of which there was no want) that in a short time he was almost depriv'd of his understanding; so that he was in a short time convey'd to bed, at which good *Omen* the Priest coucluded all was safe: no sooner was the Gentlewoman in her Chamber, but he came and softly knocking at the door, desired admittance, the which she at first most obstinately denyed, but he telling her he had business of importance (he being her Confessor) and so with much intreaty and many protestations of civility, obtained entrance; but being no sooner in, but partly by violence and partly by the operation of the Drug, with her consent he obtained his desire, and blasted all her Virgin honours; after which, he well considering that a growing shame would be the sequel of the deed, whereupon he (with her consent) advised her Uncle to consent to her Marriage, and to further the design, procured one of his own creatures; but the aforesaid Gentleman by reason of the mean-ness of his fortune, and vicious courtes, would by no interceſſion admit of his so much as visiting his Neese; the Priest seeing his expectation fail in this, resolves to try his farther experience, to spoil conception or to cause an obortive delivery, but his medicine failed herein: So is Almighty

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providence often pleased to bring such Villanies to light, for in fulness of time she was delivered of a Son, unknown to any but the *Priest*, her self, and her Maid-servant; no sooner was the Infant born, but the aforesaid *Brown* (as he pretended to prevent discovery and save the Gentlewomans credit) did with a penknife most barbarously murder it, and for a more secret conveyance, cast it into a pond in the Orchard, with a mossy stone about its neck. So cruel and inhumane are all those who bear the mark of the Beast in their foreheads, and worship the Scarlet whore who is made drunk with the blood of the Saints, *&c.* So this villanous Exploit rested secure and undiscovered for above the space of a year, in which space the priest was fled for Religion, or rather for Treason upon the miraculous discovery of the late plot; but Heaven that lets Murder sleep in silence long, after a most strange nature, brought this Cruelty to light, for the Servant Maid that was privy to this intreague, being taken sick and at the point of death, desired that a protestant Minister might pray by her, to whom she confessed the nature and manner of the aforesaid Murder; whereupon the Gentlewoman was taken into custody, and being examined before a justice of the peace, freely confessed the Fact, and at the grand Assizes holden this 14th. of *August* 1679, at the Town of *Newcastle* received her Tryal, where she was found accessary to wilful murder, and thereupon according to Law, received Sentence of Death, but by the mediation of Friends, at much cost and trouble, obtained a gracious Reprieve. Let these sad Examples be a warning to all, least subtile villains by cuning devices, contrive their ruine and destruction, not only of body, but of Eternal welfare too.

FINIS.